47

MINUTES

OF THE

FORTY-SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST ASSOCIATION,

HELD WITH THE

NEW PROVIDENCE CHURCH, AMITE COUNTY, MISS.,

October 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, 1853.

NATCHEZ:
Printed at the Natchez Daily Courier Book and Job Office.

1853.

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FORTY-SEVENTH ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

Mississippi Baptist Association.

NEW PROVIDENCE CHURCH,

AMITE COUNTY OCTOBER 1, 1853.

The Mississippi Baptist Association met pursuant to adjournment, with the New Providence Church, Amite county, Mississippi.—Elder Z. Reeves preached the Introductory Sermon, from Isaiah 2d chapter and 2d verse.

ITEM 1. After a short recess, the Association was called to order by the Moderator, and prayer was made by Elder T. M. Bond.

2. Appointed Elder H. McKnight and Bro. C. C. Cain Reading Clerks.

3. Called for and read Letters from twenty-four Churches, enrolled the names of their Delegates, and minuted their statistics.

4. The Association proceeded to the election of officers for the ensuing year; Bros. M. S. Shirk and W. F. Cain tellers, who reported that Elder Z. Reeves was re-elected Moderator, and Bro. C. C. Cain, Clerk.

5. Ministering Brethren present invited to seats with us, and to participate with us in our deliberations.

6. The door was then opened for the reception of Churches, when the St. Helena Church presented a Petitionary Letter by the hands of her Delegates, Sam'l Davis and M. H. McCraine; which on examination was found orthodox, and admitted into our union. The Bethel Church also presented her Petitionary

Letter by the hand of her Delegate, Rev. T. M. Bond; which on exanination was found orthodox, and admitted into our union.

7. Appointed Bros. T. R. Cheatham, G. P. Claughton and W. F. Cain a Committee on Preaching.

8. Received Correspondence from Sister Associations, and the hand of fellowship extended to their Messengers, as follows:

Pearl River—Elder Wm. Fortenberry and Bro. W. C. Maxwell, with a Letter and package of Minutes.

Mississippi River—Elders Wm. Wall and Lemuel Wall, with a package of Minutes.

Eastern Louisiana—Bros. D. M. Chaney and A. Pennington, with a package of Minutes.

9. The Committee on Preaching reported that Elders Wm. Fortenberry, J. H. Smiley and S. Coker preach on the Lord's-day, in the order of their names; and in case Elder Coker fail, Elder T. M. Bond to close the services.

10. Appointed Correspondence, as follows:

Mississippi River—Elder H. McKnight to write, and Elders A. McKenzie and H. McKnight, Messengers.

Pearl River—Elder A. McKenzie to write, and Elders S. Coker and Z. Reeves, Messengers.

Eastern Louisiana—Elder Calvin Magee to write, and J. H. Smiley and Calvin Magee, Messengers.

Union—Bro. Claughton to write, and Elders E. McKay and W. Clark, Messengers.

Ebenezer—Elder McKenzie to write, and Elders Magee and McKenzie, Messengers.

11. Appointed Bro. J. Walker Treasurer *pro tem.* of the funds sent up by the Churches for missionary and benevolent purposes.

12. Appointed a Financial Committee, viz: Bro. T. J. Andrews, P. B. Williams and Richard Bates.

13. Appointed a Committee to take charge of the missionary and benevolent funds sent up by the Churches, viz: Bros. G. P. Claughton, S. M. Brian and John Gunby.

14. Appointed a Committee of Arrangement and Revision, viz: Elders S. Coker, M. S. Shirk, Calvin Magee, together with the Moderator and Clerk.

15. Motion that Elder A. McKenzie be allowed the usual compensation for his attendance at the place appointed for the Union Association, the same not having assembled on account of a prevailing epidemic.

16. Motion that Elder M. S. Shirk be excused for this evening.

17. Appointed a Special Committee to report respecting a difficulty between the Zion Hill and Mt. Olive Churches, to wit: Elders H. McKnight, Calvin Magee, A. McKenzie, T. M. Bond, Bros. T. R. Cheatham, S. M. Brian and W. F. Cain.

18. The Amite Female Seminary, through the President of their Board of Trustees, presented a memorial to the Association, praying her to take charge of the same; which was referred to the following Committee, to wit: Bros. S. M. Brian, P. B. Williams, R. Thompson, D. D. Rollins, S. Davis, and Elder Z. Reeves.

19. Bros. Dodd and R. Jones were granted leave of absence.

The stand being occupied, since the Introductory, by Elders Wm. Fortenberry and T. M. Bond, the Association adjourned to 9 o'clock, Monday morning; concluding prayer by Elder J. H. Smiley.

EXERCISES OF THE SABBATH.

An immense congregation assembled at an early hour at the stand near the church, and Elder Wm. Fortenberry preached from the first chapter of Paul to the Romans, 16th verse. He was followed by Elder J. H. Smiley from Proverbs 29th chapter and 1st verse. An intermission of one hour was given for refreshments; after which the congregation again came together, and Elder H. McKnight preached from Paul to the Corinthians, 4th chapter and 5th verse. Elder T. M. Bond concluded the services of the day with a very feeling exhortation, at the conclusion of which many presented themselves asking an interest in his prayers.

STATISTICAL TABLE OF THE CHURCHES.

Churches.	Delegates.	Counties.....	Post Offices.....	Baptized.....	Received by letter..	Excluded.....	Restored.....	Dead.....	Dismissed.....	Whites.....	Colored.....	Total in Fellowship	Ministers.....	Copies of Minutes.	Contributions.....
N. Providence	R. Thompson, T. R. Cheatham,	Amite,	Liberty,	2	4	2		2	2	75	44	119		40	6
Ebenezer,	J. Gunby, T. J. Anders,	Amite,	Rose Hill,	1	1	4		2	8	81	39	120		60	10
East Fork,	Z. Reeves, J. A. Jenkins,	Amite,	Liberty,	9	3			2	5	76	17	93	1	75	10
Zion Hill,	C. C. Cain, J. R. Anderson,	Amite,	Zion Hill,	8	5	6		3	1	47	17	64		50	7
Shiloh,	W. F. Dyson, A. McKenzie,	Wilkinson,	H. Retreat,	1	3					8	67	75		24	1
Gallilee,	G. P. Claughton, D. D. Rollins,	Amite,	Centreville	7	6	1		2	6	94	26	120	1	75	10
Hopewell,	W. P. Dods, W. F. Cain,	Franklin,	Meadville,		1			1		14	7	21		20	1
Marshill,	C. Magee, J. Coney,	Amite,	Smithdale,	13	1			2	1	35	3	38		40	5
Salem,	A. B. Loftin, Wm. Case,	Pike,	R. Creek,	8	1	1	1	1	5	46	8	54	2	35	4
Friendship,	J. A. Roten, W. Clark,	Franklin,	Friendship	19	1			1		54	2	55		30	4
Ramah,	J. H. Smiley, S. M. Brian,	Amite,	Smithdale,	8					4	21	1	22	1	25	4
Jackson,	R. Albriton, P. Wallace,	E. Feliciana,	Jackson La	18	1	1		1	1	21	111	132	1	25	6
Mt. Pleasant,	H. McKnight, M. S. Shirk,	Pike,	Holmesvi'e		3			4		27	4	31		40	5
Liberty,	R. Bates, W. Cotton,	Amite,	Liberty,	31	9			5	11	136	54	190	2	60	10
Mt. Zion,	R. Jones, Jas. Hart,	Franklin,	Meadville,	12	3			2				50		40	5
Friendship,	A. Moke, A. Richmond,	Pike,	Holmesvi'e									11		15	4
Spring Hill,	M. Neale, J. W. Pearce,	Franklin,	Homochito	11	8	1		1		33	5	38		25	3
Mt. Zion,	H. A. Davis, J. Walker,	Copiah,	Colamer,	8	1			1		63	2	65		50	8
Bogue Chitto,	P. B. Williams, S. Coker,	Pike,	Holmesvi'e	4	1			1	1	90	20	110		70	10
Mt. Moriah,	W. Turner, E. McCaa,	Lawrence,	Brookhavn	6	1			1		35	3	38		30	5
Sarepta,	H. B. Cole, No Communicat'n	Franklin,	Malcolm,	1	3	1	1		1			26	1	30	4
New Salem,	R. Tickle, J. S. Smith,	Wilkinson,	Woodville,	4				4		26	25	51		40	5
Percy's Creek	M. Whittington, P. Whittington,	Franklin,	Homochito							11	4	15		25	3
Mt. Olive,	P. Smith, T. Case,	Copiah,	Friendship	4	2							22	2	30	3
Macedonia,	S. Davis, M. H. McCraine,	St. Helena Parish, La.	Darlington	1				1				13		25	3
St. Helena,	T. M. Bond,	Wilkinson,	Woodville,		2					13		13	3	30	5
Bethel				176	60	17	2	32	51	1006	459	1586	14	1129	158

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CHURCHES.

Dead	Dismissed	Whites	Colored	Total in Fellowship	Ministers	Copies of Minutes
2	2	75	44	119		40
2	8	81	39	120		60
2	5	76	17	93	1	75
3	1	47	17	64		50
		8	67	75		24
2	6	94	26	120	1	75
		14	7	21		20
1		35	3	38		40
5		46	8	54	2	35
		54	2	56		30
4		21	1	22	1	25
1		21	111	132	1	25
		27	4	31		40
11		136	54	190	2	60
			50			40
			11			15
		33	5	38		25
		63	2	65		50
1		90	20	110		70
		35	3	38		30
1			26	1	30	4
		26	25	51		40
		11	4	15		25
			22	2	30	
			13		25	
		13		13	3	30
1006		459	1586	14	1129	150

MONDAY MORNING, October 3, 1853.

20. The Association met pursuant to adjournment.—Prayer by the Moderator.

21. The Committee of Arrangement and Revision made their report, which is as follows, to wit:

1. Call the Roll.
2. Read the Rules of Decorum.
3. Call for Reports.
4. Call for the Circular.
5. Call for Corresponding Letters.
6. Call for Queries.
7. Motions and Resolutions.
8. Appointments.
9. Adjournment.

Respectfully submitted. S. Coker, Chairman.

22. The Roll was called.

23. Read the Rules of Decorum and Powers of the Association.

24. Reports called for. The Committee on Preaching reported that Elders Calvin Magee and Wm. B. Wall preach to-day in the order of their names.

25. Bro. Wm. F. Cain, one of the Committee appointed at the last session of this body to visit the New Salem Church, reported as follows, which was received and agreed to, viz:

To the Mississippi Association:

One of the Committee appointed at your last meeting to visit the New Salem Church, West Feliciana Parish, La., begs leave to make the following report: The undersigned visited the neighborhood of said Church, on or about the 23d of July last, and found three members—one of them the Pastor. They told the undersigned that the Church was in a scattered situation, and they had not held a Conference since your Committee visited them in 1851, and they did not know whether they would ever hold another Conference. Your Committee would recommend the Association to withdraw from said Church. (Signed) Wm. F. Cain.

26. The Committee on the subject of the Amite Female Seminary made their report, which was received and agreed to, viz:

The Committee, to whom the memorial of the Board of Trustees of the Amite Female Seminary was referred, beg leave to report, that the establishment of the proposed Female Seminary is, in the opinion of your Committee, a worthy and desirable object, and one worthy of approbation and support. That the necessity of an institution for the education of our daughters in this section of our country

is greatly felt, while the advantages which now result from the establishment of such an institution cannot well be estimated. In view of the agency of this Association in the matter, your Committee is of opinion that the arrangements which have already been made for the perfecting of the establishment of the proposed Seminary, are wise and judicious, and likely to prove successful. That the Board of Trustees of said Seminary, and their principles of action, meet with the hearty approval of your Committee. However, as the Board of Trustees of said Seminary are anxious that this Association shall take action upon the subject, in order to aid the enterprise and to secure the same under the control of the Baptist denomination for all time to come, your Committee suggest that the Association recommend the establishment of the proposed Seminary, and consent, as requested by said Board of Trustees, to appoint Trustees of the said Seminary triennially for all future time.

Your Committee present to your body the following resolutions for adoption in the premises, viz:

Resolved, That this Association approve of the effort to establish a Female Seminary of high order under the control of the Baptist denomination within the bounds of this Association.

Resolved, That this Association recommend the establishment of such a Seminary.

Resolved, That this Association approves of the arrangements already made towards accomplishing said enterprise, and recommend the Board of Trustees of Amite Female Seminary to the Baptist denomination, as every way worthy of regard and confidence.

Resolved, That this Association, in order to promote the interest of said Seminary, will appoint, every three years, Trustees of said Seminary for all future time, if a Charter can be procured for said Seminary allowing the same, and that in the appointment of said Trustees, this Association shall always appoint members of regular Baptist Churches as such Trustees.

Submitted.

ZACHARIAH REEVES, Chairman.

27. The Committee on the difficulty between the Zion Hill and Mt. Olive Churches, made their report, which was received and agreed to, viz:

The Committee, to whom the matter of the grievance of the Zion Hill Church against the Mt. Olive Church was referred, beg leave respectfully to report as follows:

That from the facts which have been presented to your Committee, your Committee is of opinion that a difficulty exists between said Churches likely to disturb, if it has not already done so, their peace and harmony. That your Committee is also of the opinion, that while this Association claims no authority to interfere in the internal

affairs of the Churches, nor to meddle with their government; yet as one of its objects is to promote the union of Churches, and to settle difficulties which may arise among the Churches in her union as an *advisory* body, that this Association, as far as she has influence, ought to endeavor to remove the grievance existing, and to settle the said difficulty. Your Committee deeply deplores the existence of the said difficulty, and trusts the Great Head of the Church may remove the same, and bless any proper effort for said purpose. Your Committee begs leave to suggest that this Association appoint a judicious Committee of Brethren, to wait on said Churches and endeavor by their advice and assistance to settle the same.

Your Committee, therefore, offers the following resolution for adoption, viz:

Resolved, That a Committee of fifteen Members of this Association be appointed to wait upon the Zion Hill and Mt. Olive Churches, and by their advice and assistance endeavor to settle the grievance or difficulty existing between them.

Respectfully submitted. S. M. Brian, Chairman.

Under the above resolution, the following were appointed on said Committee, viz: Brethren J. B. Quin, Jeremiah Walker, H. McKnight, Calvin Magee, G. P. Claughton, Wm. F. Cain, Wm. Marsalis, Wilson Clark, R. Thompson, T. R. Cheatham, Samuel Davis, M. H. McCraine, Wm. L. Johns, W. F. Dysen, and J. S. Smith.

28. On motion, Elder Z. Reeves was added to the list of Messengers to the Union and Mississippi River Associations.

29. The Circular Letter was called for, read and adopted.

30. Corresponding Letters were called for, read and adopted.

31. The Financial Committees made their reports, which were received and agreed to. [See Appendices A. and B.]

32. On motion, the following preamble and resolution was adopted, to wit:

In view of the great facilities now offered for Missionary and other benevolent enterprises in which all may engage, we most affectionately urge upon the Churches the propriety of their taking collections annually at least, and send up to the Association, designating the object to which they wish them applied. Therefore, be it—

Resolved, That we request every Pastor in our bounds to use his best endeavor for collecting and sending up moneys for benevolent purposes with regularity and system.

On motion, *Resolved*, That we consider the duty of family prayer, at morning and night, an important duty; and in

view of the lamentable neglect of it, especially in the morning, we recommend our Brethren in the Ministry to use their influence to promote the practice of this duty among all the Brethren in the Churches.

34. *Resolved*, That we recommend to all the Churches the propriety of organizing and maintaining Baptist Sunday Schools and Bible Classes in their Churches.

35. *Resolved*, That the Constitution of this Association be so amended as to give the Moderator power to call a meeting of the Association in the event of a failure at the regular time of meeting.

36. On motion of Elder McKnight, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted, viz:

Whereas, our beloved Brother, Elder A. McKenzie, has accepted the agency of the Indian Mission Association, and expects to enter shortly fully upon his duties—Therefore,

Resolved, That we recommend our beloved Brother to the Christian sympathies and fraternal kindness and respect of the Baptist denomination in the adjoining States, or wherever he may travel.

Resolved, That our sympathies and prayers go with him; that God may own and bless his labors, and give him grace and abundant success in the great and good cause in which he is engaged.

37. On motion of Bro. W. F. Cain, *Resolved*, That the Committee appointed to meet with the Mt. Olive and Zion Hill Churches to settle the difficulty between them, be instructed to meet at the Mt. Olive Church on Saturday before the first fifth Sunday in 1854, and that the Zion Hill Church by a Committee meet at said time and place.

38. On motion of Bro. D. D. Rollins, the following preamble and resolutions were adopted, viz:

Whereas, Brother Claughton requested to be released from serving this body as Clerk, and as Bro. Claughton has served us faithfully for many years—

Resolved, That this body express our cordial thanks for his faithful and able discharge of duty.

Resolved, That the thanks of this body are due to the Brethren and friends of this neighborhood for the liberal manner in which they have entertained us during our stay among them.

Resolved, That we tender our thanks to the Moderator and Clerk of this Association, for the faithful and impartial manner in which they have each discharged their respective duties.

39. Appointed Elder Calvin Magee to preach the next Introductory Sermon, and Elder H. McKnight his alternate.

40. Appointed the Clerk to superintend the printing and distributing thirteen hundred copies of the Minutes of this meeting of the Association, and that he receive the usual compensation; and that he draw on the Treasurer for funds to defray the expenses of the same.

41. Appointed Elder M. S. Shirk to prepare a Circular Letter.

42. Appointed that the next meeting of this body be held with the Serepta Church, 14 miles north of Meadville, Franklin county, Miss., commencing on Saturday before the first Sabbath in October, A. D. 1854.

43. The Minutes were read for correction, Elder S. Coker being expected to occupy the stand. In a few minutes we were dismissed, omitting public prayer.

ZACHARIAH REEVES, MODERATOR.

C. C. CAIN, Clerk.

Ministers of the Mississippi Baptist Association.

SHADRACH COKER,	J. H. SMILEY,
ZACHARIAH REEVES,	WM. THOMPSON,
HAMILTON MCKNIGHT,	T. M. BOND,
WILSON CLARK,	ELIHU MCCAA,
ALEXANDER MCKENZIE,	T. KINGSBERRY,
CALVIN MAGEE,	WILLIAM EAST,
M. S. SHIRK,	F. CLARK.

Appendix A.

Report of the Financial Committee.

Debit.

In the hands of the Treasurer,	$ 74 08	
Contributions of the Churches,	150 00	$224 08

Credit.

Paid A. McKenzie,	$ 10 00	
Paid W. Clark,	36 00	
Paid Z. Reeves per W. Clark,	8 00	
Paid M. Seale per James Seale,	14 00	
Paid J. L. Downs per T. M. Bond,	8 00	$76 00
In the hands of the Treasurer,		$148 08

Respectfully submitted.

P. B. WILLIAMS,
RICHARD BATES,
T. J. ANDREWS,
} Committee.

Appendix B.

Report of the Financial Committee on the Missionary Fund.

JAMES B. QUIN, Treasurer of Missionary Fund,
In account with the Mississippi Association.

Your Treasurer charges himself with the following sums, received as per report made at last meeting of your body, viz:

Amount received for	Foreign Missions,	$33 55	
do. do.	Domestic Missions,	9 00	
do. do.	Indian Missions,	30 30	
do. do.	Foreign Bible Society,	18 00	
do. do.	Educating of Ministers,	5 00	
Amount in the hands of former Treasurer,		15	$96 00

Your Treasurer prays allowance for the following disbursements, viz:

By this sum paid Arch'd Thomas, Treasurer for Foreign Missions, as per receipt No. 1,	35 00	
By this sum paid W. Hornbuckle, Treas. for Domestic Missionary Board, as per receipt No. 2,	10 00	
By this sum paid Chas. S. Tucker, Treas. of Indian Mission Association, as per receipt No. 3,	30 00	
By this sum paid Chas. A. Fuller, Treas. of Bible Board of S. B. Convention, as pr. receipt No. 4,	20 00	$95 00
Balance in hands of Treasurer,		$1 00

All of which is respectfully submitted.

JAS. B. QUIN, Treas. Miss. Fund.

Your Committee have examined the above report, and find it correct.

S. M. BRIAN,
G. P. CLAUGATON,
J. GUNBY,
} Committee.

CIRCULAR LETTER.

BY ELDER H. McKNIGHT.

Beloved Brethren:—Through the mercy of our God, we have been permitted to meet again according to appointment, and have enjoyed an agreeable interview with our friends and brethren. The Letters from the Churches which were attended to upon the first day of our meeting, afforded us pleasure and pain. We have been pained to learn of the existence of some difficulties affecting the peace and quiet of some of the Churches in our union, which we trust will be overruled by our Heavenly Father, for His own glory and the good of His Zion, yet we have rejoiced in the intelligence that the Lord has continued to manifest His saving mercy among His people, in bringing many sons and daughters into the fellowship of the Churches. The return of our anniversary calls for our usual Circular Letter, and feeling a desire to promote your improvement, we address you upon a subject of general interest, viz: *The Holiness of the Churches.* We do not expect to treat this important subject at large, for to do so would enlarge this Circular to a too great length, but simply to suggest some leading thoughts upon it.

That the Churches of the Lord should be holy assemblies, is a proposition that seems to need no argument to sustain it. It is evident from the very nature and fitness of things. God is a holy Being, inexpressibly and gloriously so,—should not the Churches which are His habitations through the Spirit, be also holy? A Church of Christ is a society of God's children,—should not His children be holy? The Church is said to be the Bride of Christ,—should not the Lamb's Bride be chaste and pure?

The design of the calling of the members of the Churches also exhibits this truth. They were not called into His Spiritual Kingdom that they might be "doers of iniquity," but that they should be "*holy and without blame before Him in love.*" By organizing them into a Church relation, the Divine Lawgiver intended that in such a relation, they should show forth in a combined and harmonious manner the graces of the Spirit, and display the beauties of holiness. That they should be as lights in the moral world, dispelling the darkness which envelopes the nations, as the salt of the earth which is to exert a healthful and preserving holy tendency upon Adam's guilty race. Accordingly we find the Scriptures representing the membership of the Churches, "as saints," "as believers," "as the faithful in Christ Jesus," "as temples of the Holy Spirit," "as Holy Brethren," "as the Godly," "a holy priesthood," "a peculiar people purified from iniquity," and as those "zealous of good works." It is apparent from these descriptive phrases describing the material of the Churches, that they were and are designed to be holy spiritual congregations of those who are washed in the Redeemer's blood, and sanctified by the Spirit of God.

The Scriptures are explicit upon the subject. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," saith the Lord. This injunction applies equally to the assemblies of God's people, as to His people individually. For if the individual Christian is required to be holy, surely a society of such are under accumulated obligations to be so. An Apostle informs us that Christ gave himself for the Church, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without "blemish." Such declarations as these, need no comment. They clearly teach that the Churches of Christ should be, and were designed to be, holy assemblies, in which are *seen the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God.*

The purity of the Churches unquestionably consists in their exact conformity in doctrine, practice and government to the will of God as revealed in the Scriptures. What He has enjoined and forbidden, is the standard of their holiness. No matter how fair they may seem in the eyes of man and be esteemed by the ungodly, if they differ in any of these respects from the requisitions of the Divine Being, they are to that extent impure and corrupt.

That sound doctrines are essential to the Scriptural purity of the Churches will, we presume, not be questioned. It is true, that there are some in this, as in all ages of the Church, who do not seem to regard soundness in doctrine as a matter of great importance, but we rejoice to think that there are but few, if any, such among us. They seem to think that there is but little or no connection between one's principles and practice, and hence adopt the language of the poet—

> "For forms of faith, let faithless bigots fight,
> He can't be wrong, whose heart is in the right."

The Apostles, however, taught a vastly different doctrine. They seemed to consider soundness in the doctrines of the Scriptures as essential to the moral and religious purity of individuals and Churches. They have, through inspiration of the Spirit, given repeated and express commands "to hold fast to the faith," "to keep the faith," "to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." They have instructed us to beware, lest we be seduced away from the simplicity of the Gospel, and thus fall under condemnation—to shun profane and vain babblings, and science, falsely so called; for such will lead unto ungodliness. Would the Apostles thus have taught, and thus required obedient adherence to the faith, if such obedience was not essential for our purity, and that of the Churches?

Doctrines are but principles, and false principles in morality or religion will necessarily exert a corrupt and unholy influence; for error cannot serve otherwise than to injure those who hold it. This is true of individuals and societies. No man, nor association of men, can

hold defective and pernicious principles, but that the defects thereof will be seen in their conduct, if they act consistently; for there is an inseparable connection between belief and action. The one is the foundation, the other the stream flowing from it. As we cannot carry fire in our bosoms without being burnt, so we cannot hold false principles without being polluted. The cases of the individuals mentioned in the word of God, who put away faith, corroborates these views; and the Churches of Pergamos and Thyatira may be cited as abundantly proving that a departure from sound doctrines has a corrupt and unholy tendency, and is displeasing to Christ. In fact unsound doctrines are as the pestilence that walketh in darkness, as a poisonous wind which carries death imperceptibly and surely on its wings.

It is not enough, however, that the Churches should maintain sound Scriptural doctrines in order to their purity: it is also requisite that their practice should correspond in purity with their doctrines; for it is possible that a Church, as well as an individual, may hold "the truth in unrighteousness." Such was doubtless the case for a period of time of the Church at Corinth. No matter, therefore, how orthodox the Churches may be, if their practice be unholy, they cannot claim to be pure. Christ requires that His people, in their external conduct, should illustrate the principles of inward grace—the principles of His Spiritual Kingdom, which consist "not in meats and drinks, but joy, peace and righteousness in the Holy Ghost." Personal holiness of the members of the Churches is demanded. They must be strong in the Lord. In their lives they must follow the example of Christ, and constantly seek those things which are above. They must live godly, soberly, and righteously in this present evil world, mortifying the flesh with its unholy lusts. They are to be doers, not mere hearers of the word. A holy love to God and man must be felt in their hearts, and its influence permitted to irradiate their actions. Their "lips and lives must express, the holy Gospel they profess."

The Churches must also in practice perform the ordinances of Christ's Kingdom in the same manner and with the same design, that they were performed and practised by Christ and the Apostles, or as we are instructed to do in the Holy Spriptures. Christ has given no power to His Churches to change or abrogate His laws and ordinances, or to substitute other rites, with or without the same design, in the place of those he has established. To do so is daring rebellion against the authority of Christ. To a departure in practice, as to the manner and design of the ordinances of Christ's Kingdom, may be attributed many of the corruptions and much of the impurity which prevails in the religious world. In this departure, may be found the origin of the absurd doctrines of baptismal regeneration and the damnation of unbaptized infants. To a misconception of the institution of the Lord's Supper, St. Paul traces many of the disorders and corruptions which

prevailed in the Church at Corinth. If the Churches depart from the ordinances of Christ as He delivered them, a floodgate will be opened into which a flood of errors will rush to desolate their purity and beauty.

A scriptural government is also necessary to that purity required of the Churches in the word of God. That Christ has established a government for His Churches, and not left so important a matter to human wisdom, we believe can be easily demonstrated. A government is actually necessary to preserve that unity and order, which constitute a part of the glory of the Church—without a government, anarchy and misrule would prevail where all should be harmony and order. Conformity to the government Christ has established in His Kingdom will preserve intact the peace, purity and welfare of the Churches. In the history of the Church of the First Born, we see this fact established. Even in the days when the Little Horn of Daniel and the Mother of Harlots of John were permitted to persecute the Church, and she was compelled to seek refuge in the dens and caves of the earth, the Church still adhered to the primitive rule of government as delivered by Christ, and preserved herself pure amid the general corruptions which overspread the so-styled Christian world. But on the other hand, we find that the first sources of corruption which swept many of the early Churches into the vortex of degeneracy, were departures from the form of government, according to the scriptural method. Mosheim says, speaking of the history of the Church in the first century—"The face of things began now to change in the Christian Church. The ancient method of ecclesiastical government seemed in general to subsist, while at the same time by imperceptible steps, it varied from the primitive rule, and degenerated towards the form of a religious monarchy." "This change in the form of ecclesiastical government was soon followed by a train of vices, which dishonored the character and authority of those to whom the administration of the Church was committed." Such were the corruptions in doctrine and practice, which resulted from this departure or change in Church government, that many Churches became polluted, and were guilty of vices which brought reproach upon the name of religion. Adherence to the perfect government of Christ will protect the Churches from religious despotism, from ungodly ambition among its members, and from the spirit of envy and contention; for in that government, he that is the greatest shall be the *servant* of the many.

The purity of the Churches, according to the standard of the Bible, is important. Upon it depends in a great measure the welfare of man. A pure Bible Christianity is the only hope of fallen man to restore him to the favor of God, and such a Christianity can only be instrumentally preserved through the medium of pure Scriptural Churches.

And there is danger that the Churches may lose that purity. There is danger the loveliness of their moral characters may be despoiled or marred.

Even in the days of the Apostles, errors in doctrine and in practice found their way into the Apostolic Churches. If such things occurred in their day, have we not reason to apprehend their occurrence in these days? It becomes all to be watchful. In order that the Churches may maintain than purity and holiness, we would point out some means of its preservation—

1. Study the word of God—make it the man of your counsel. It will be a lamp to your feet. By so doing, you will learn of God, and become well established in the doctrines of the Scriptures, and instructed in the practices of Christ's Kingdom. Being thus established and instructed, you will be enabled to detect errors in others, and expose them before their fatal influence take hold upon the heart.

2. *Be instant in prayer.* This is a means of our moral purification, and through its instrumentality we are furnished or supplied with all necessary blessings. In prayer we draw nigh to God, and He to us. His Divine perfections are realized and acknowledged, and our dependence upon Him felt. His perfections are in a sense enstamped upon the heart. By prayer, therefore, the Christian is continually and daily increasing in holiness, and becomes more and more adapted for immortal happiness in the world above. Paul prayed for the sanctification of the Brethren of the Churches of Thessalonica and Phillippi, and thus by his example instructs us that this ordinance is a means of the purification of the Churches.

3. Be careful to shun the least departure from the truth of God. We know not what evils may enter in at the slightest deviation. A small crevice will eventually enlarge, so as to let through a flood—a little fire will kindle a great matter—

> "Beware of sin, then,—crush it at the door,
> If once 'tis in, it may go out no more."

4. Be faithful in the reception of your members. Many now, as in the first ages of the Church, seek fellowship with the people of God who are disqualified—being either deceived, or actuated by improper motives; and this is to be apprehended during those seasons of revival with which God is pleased to favor His Zion. The introduction of disqualified persons into the membership of the household of faith, has a tendency to affect its purity and peace. The union of the unregenerated with those born of the Spirit, is corrupting. Faithfulness in guarding the doors of the Church will prevent to some extent this evil. The doors of it are not to be set wide open for any to enter who pleases, but only for the admission of those who are circumcised in heart. No material was admitted to be laid in the erection of the

temple, but such as were hewn and squared beforehand—so the Churches should not allow any to enter in as members of God's temple, the Church, except such as are "*lively stones.*"

5. *Guard well your pulpits.* Have only faithful Ministers, orthodox Pastors to break to you the bread of life. In no way will error creep more imperceptibly into the Churches than through artful teachings from the sacred desk. Anticipating only to hear truth promulgated from thence, we are generally indisposed to apprehend error, and thus it is propagated without rebuke. The period is yet remembered, when many of the Churches of this body were divided and torn, through the insiduous instructions and influences of the followers of Alexander Campbell, who, in the guise of friends and Baptists, were permitted to ascend their pulpits. Improve by the experience of the past, and suffer no one to preach to you who does not preach the truth as it is in Jesus.

6. Consent not to the ordination of any officer, Minister or Deacon, who does not fully satisfy you of his piety and soundness in Gospel doctrines. If persons are elevated to these responsible offices who are unsound in faith and practice, they will lead others astray, and that in proportion to the expansion of their influence arising out of their stations. Many a person in the character of a Minister of the Gospel has done much evil, which, in the character of a private member, he could not have accomplished. Instances of this are fresh in our recollections. It is prudent to adopt the language of an eminent Minister (now gone to his rest, but whose memory is precious to us all) as a principle of action, to "give no one a stick with which to break our heads."

7. *By the enforcement of strict Gospel discipline.* By this, the Church can be purged of the ungodly, and the erring and backsliding reclaimed. In the enforcement of discipline, the Churches should not wink at any ungodliness in life or conduct among its members, but should, in every instance and in all cases, preserve their purity by enforcing compliance with the requisitions of the word of God.

In conclusion, we commend unto you, Brethren, the words of the Apostle, "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel, and in nothing be terrified by your adversaries." Brethren, keep yourselves unspotted from the world, that you may be the sons of God without rebuke, and be found worthy to stand before the Son of Man, when He shall come to judge the world in righteousness.

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